

**STATEMENT OF MAYOR ALSON KELEN
KILI/BIKINI/EJIT LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL
BEFORE THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA, THE
PACIFIC AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT**

May 20, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am Alson Kelen, and I have been the mayor of the Kili/Bikini/Ejit Local Government Council since 2009.

Although I was not born on Bikini, I lived there for several years as a little boy in the 1970s until my family was evacuated in 1979. For my generation, as for my elders, Bikini still represents our Promised Land – our homeland – the place where we belong – ourselves, our elders, and our children.

What I want to discuss with you today is the USDA food program for the four atolls. Our written statement covers this in detail, but here are the key points:

- This program was in place for many years before the Compact came into effect in the 1980s.
- The first Compact Act continued the program and said Congress will consider “additional funding for these programs as may be necessary.”
- The program was continued in 2003 when the Compact was extended, and Congress added language directing the U.S. to make sure that the program keeps up with changes in the population of the four atolls.
- The problem is obvious: Our populations have increased significantly over the years, but the size of the USDA program hasn’t.
- The combination of the radiation problems in the soils of the four atolls and the recent decline in the value of our trust funds makes our food problems even more serious.
- Your oversight in making sure this happens would be greatly appreciated.

You have helped in the past, and we know you will do whatever you can now.

Thank you.